
Urban Counties Coalition- Ravalli, Missoula, Flathead, Lewis and Clark, Cascade, Gallatin, Yellowstone

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Chair Smith and Commissioners:

Thank you for your service to the State of Montana on the Districting and Apportionment Commission. Your job is an important one and we are encouraged by the work accomplished to date. Please accept this letter of comment from the Urban Counties Coalition of the Montana Association of Counties.

As you became familiar with your roles and responsibilities on the Commission you've been repeatedly directed to the provisions of Title 5, Chapter 1, Part 1. In summary, the districts must be proportional in population and should make good geographical sense. It appears your current versions honor the population parity but look to divide population centers. We request that you keep the population centers as whole as reasonably possible. Please do not divide our communities when other alternatives are available to honor the size and population requirements of redistricting.

Furthermore, please keep partisan politics out of your decision-making process. Montana Code Annotated provides clear direction and 5.5.115 (3) is the area our comment is focused on.

(3) A district may not be drawn for the purposes of favoring a political party or an incumbent legislator or member of congress. The following data or information may not be considered in the development of a plan:

- (a) addresses of incumbent legislators or members of congress;
- (b) political affiliations of registered voters;
- (c) partisan political voter lists; or
- (d) previous election results, unless required as a remedy by a court.

Montanans are excited to receive an additional U.S. House member, and Montanans take pride in our election system and representative democracy. We encourage you to follow the law in your final determination of the congressional district mapping process. Please leave politics out of the decision of where to draw the line between two congressional districts that are equal in population and do not divide communities.

Sincerely,

MACo Urban Counties